

Complications by [jhuniemarieilarde](#)

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Fantasy, Sci-Fi

Language: English

Characters: J. Hopper, Jonathan B., Joyce B., Will B.

Status: Completed

Published: 2019-07-22 04:53:04

Updated: 2019-07-24 05:03:51

Packaged: 2019-12-12 19:09:56

Rating: T

Chapters: 3

Words: 6,331

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: A prequel story before El and the whole Upside Down thing happened in Hawkins. Hopper has just been appointed as Chief of Police and has to face the things that had changed in his home town which includes Joyce being married to Lonnie. Will he pursue on a quest to win her back or will he rest his hat and let things play out on their own? (Just because I love Jopper so much!)

1. Chapter 1

It's been a month since Hopper has been appointed as the new Chief of Police of Hawkins. He attended small crimes since then like dispute over a tree, cheating husbands being caught by their wives, lost dog, even dispute over parking spaces. It's been a light and boring chapter for him. At least, it gives him distraction and a reason to get out of bed every morning. Of course, Flo is the main reason he gets up every morning. She will ring his phone until he picks it up forcing him out of the bed.

It's a normal morning routine for coffee and contemplation. The only difference is he needs to drop by Melvald's to pick up a few batteries. He didn't bother removing his hat and his sunglasses when he entered the shop. He strolled down the aisles but he cannot find the right size he's looking for so he went to the counter. There is no one posted there so he rang the bell multiple times at an annoying speed.

"Alright! Alright! Jesus...where's the fire?" a woman yelled from the back.

Hopper rolled his eyes around. He badly needs his coffee and his stop at Melvald's is delaying that much awaited drink.

"What is it?" a woman called out his attention.

He turned around and saw Joyce Byers. He almost froze as he didn't expect to see her at all. He heard that she has been married to Lonnie Byers and that she has two sons but he hasn't seen her since he came back.

"Hey", he greeted briefly.

Joyce stiffened too. She has prayed that she will not run into him at the streets. It's been a long time since she saw him and it was a painful memory too. She quickly brushed her hair a little towards her hair to cover up a slight bruise on her face but it's too late. He already seen it.

"What is that?" he asked.

"What is what?" she asked him back pretending she has no idea what he's talking about.

"Are you seriously going to play that game on me? Who did that to you?" Hopper asked firmly.

Joyce sighed deeply before looking back at him.

"You wanted to buy something, Chief?" she asked turning on her cold façade.

Hopper frowned at the sudden switch in her tone. She's hiding it like she's protecting someone and that's when he got the answer he's looking for. He chuckled and then shook his head.

"Your husband did that to you", he muttered.

She's not sure if he knows who her husband is but considering he is the Chief of Police, he must know it somehow. She kept quiet trying not to prolong the conversation.

"How is being married to Lonnie Byers working out for you?" he asked with a taunting smile.

Joyce felt insulted by his tone. He's not cruel. He's never been cruel to her but this time it's like he's a different person. She can see the condemning look in his eyes like somehow the one to blame in her situation is no one but her. She felt sick to her stomach that she cannot respond to his remark so she just looked down the floor to avoid his gaze.

Hopper knew that what he said hurt her even though she's not saying anything. That's another thing about Joyce. She doesn't like expressing what she feels out loud. She's always been like that even when they were in high school. She likes to keep it to herself. That is another example of that. He pressed her button and she didn't respond.

"So are you buying something or not?" Joyce asked once she composed herself. Her tone is a lot colder than before.

"Yeah...battery, AA", he answered.

Joyce checked behind her and then grabbed a couple of batteries and punched it in. Hopper handed her the money and she handed him the battery. He grabbed her arm once he noticed something. Joyce tried to take back her arm but his grip is too strong for her. He slid her sleeve and saw large bruises on her pale arm.

"Let go of my arm, Hopper", Joyce ordered and he did.

She quickly rolled over her sleeve to hide the bruises. Hopper just watched her do it with disbelief. How in the hell she get like this? He thought.

"You should file a report about that", he said.

"Stay out of my life, Hopper", she snapped.

He wanted to protest but he realized it's not his business to intervene. She's married now.

"Fine", he replied and then left the store.

It's the most awaited reunion at Hawkins High School. The gym was decorated in a colorful manner and everyone is encouraged to dress to impress. Hopper arrived with a blonde bombshell in his arms. He met her a couple of days ago outside of town and he thought she'll be a nice accessory to the festivities.

Joyce arrived with Lonnie at the school gym. Both are wearing black leather jackets. Joyce is wearing her black dress that she bought years ago. She only wore it once before and she's pretty sure no one will remember it. The dress reached her upper knee revealing her legs to all. The low neckline accentuated her chest and her hair is done in a messy waves. Most women went for the light color makeups and pink lips but not Joyce. Her eyes are dark and her lips are blood red. She looked extremely different from the Joyce they know who works at Melvald's store.

Hopper eyes immediately followed Joyce and Lonnie across the gym. The thought went for drinks right away. Lonnie handed her a bottle of beer while she lit up a cigarette. Hopper can hear Lonnie

whispering something in her ear that she doesn't seem to like. Joyce rolled her eyes around and just like that, Lonnie left her side. Joyce remained by the bar and continued drinking and smoking. Karen Wheeler tried talking to her but she cannot take the smoke coming out of Joyce's mouth so she left too.

"I'll be back", Hopper said to his date and went to Joyce.

She knows he's standing next to her but she chose to ignore her. Most people that night leave once she continues to ignore them. Perhaps, it will work on Hopper too.

"I'm surprised you still have that dress", Hopper commented.

Joyce looked at him and rolled her eyes. She cannot believe he still remember her dress.

"Yeah, I don't earn that much so throwing away clothes is not practical", she said.

Hopper looked at her from head to toe admiring her beauty.

"I always like it on you. I'm pretty sure you're aware of that", he said.

Joyce swallowed. Her breath is becoming heavy.

"Shouldn't you be with your blonde date?" she asked changing the subject.

"Maybe...but I am here with you", he answered.

Joyce turned to face him.

"What exactly do you want from me, Hopper?" she asked.

Hopper looked at her brown eyes and pale cheeks before his eyes got caught up by her red lips.

"Did I ever tell you how beautiful you are?" he asked her back.

She scoffed in disbelief.

"Yeah, you did...a lot of times before you left me and didn't contact

me for years. Now, you're coming back here and act like I'm still yours", Joyce answered.

"You are still mine", he replied and it surprised Joyce.

He really caught her off guard that she doesn't know what to say. They're locked on each other's eyes as the tension is quickly building up between them. It's been years and despite how much he hurt her before, he's still making her feel like the only girl in the world. Hopper is so hypnotized by her eyes that he doesn't want to look at anything but those eyes.

"Look who we have here", Lonnie intervened cutting off the moment between the two. He put his arm around Joyce and turned to Hopper. "Hawkins' Chief of Police Jim Hopper. Who would've thought that you will be Chief, right?" he added.

"Yeah...it's crazy, right? Opportunity knocks. I just answered it", Hopper said.

Lonnie smiled.

"I know the feeling. I mean, I never thought that I will be married to Joyce Horowitz but here I am married to the most beautiful girl in town and father of her two children. Life is so unpredictable, eh?" he said.

Hopper can feel his blood boiling. He knows exactly what Lonnie is doing. He knows that he and Joyce were together back then and he's rubbing it in his face that he got her after he left.

"That's right. It's unpredictable", Hopper muttered under his breath trying to control himself.

Joyce is eyeing him not to follow his impulses because she knows how short his temper is and that he dislikes Lonnie so much even back then.

"Well, have a nice night, Chief. Me and my wife will just be over there", Lonnie said and then took Joyce away from Hopper.

A few hours passed and Lonnie is already drunk. Joyce just sat by the corner still smoking waiting for the night to end. She didn't bother stopping her husband from drinking because she knows he will not listen to her. She then got up and walked outside. She cannot stand watching Lonnie make a fool out of himself in the middle of the crowd.

She went to the parking lot to catch some air. It's a clear sky but to her it felt like there are dark clouds above her head waiting to pour down on her. She's been feeling like that for a long time now but she just ignores it. Life must go on for her. She has two boys. She cannot afford to feel sorry for herself because she has to raise them. Life is unpredictable.

Joyce threw the cigarette away and was about to head back to the gym when someone grabbed her and pulled her into the alley beside the gym.

"Jesus, Hopper! What the hell?" she exclaimed when she saw his face. "Are you drunk?" she asked upon seeing his heavy eyes. Plus, he smells like alcohol.

"You mean like your husband?" he asked.

"Hopper, you need to go home", she instructed but he didn't release her from his grip.

"Why, Joyce? There are a lot of guys here in Hawkins, better, good guys, and you married that piece of shit. Are you out of your mind?" he finally asked the question he's been holding on for days.

"Don't you do that to me. Don't you even dare! You don't know what I went through when you left me. I was thrown out by my parents because of you, because I stood by you and you just left me just like that. I was supposed to go to college but I got nothing. I got no home. I got no family. Lonnie was the only person who stuck by me during those times that I was waiting for you to come back and then I got pregnant so I have to marry him. I've been through shit in my life, Hopper, and most of them were because of you so you are in no position to judge me and my choices in life because you have no fucking right!" Joyce exclaimed.

Tears escaped her eyes and fell down her cheeks. Hopper stared at her beautiful face as the tears kept falling down from her eyes. He gently wiped them with his thumbs but she tried to shake his hands away from her face.

"Joyce", he called.

She grabbed his hands and took it off of her and tried to walk away. Hopper pulled her back, put his hands on her face and kissed her deeply on her lips. Though shocked by the move, Joyce didn't resist. She knows it's wrong in a moral sense because she's married but she's been longing for this for a very long time. No one has been able to touch her the way Hopper does and now he's back. Hopper pushed her against the wall as he aggressively explored every inch of her. They're so into each other that they didn't notice someone has come out of the gym.

"Oh, shit...sorry", a guy muttered and then turned away.

The two broke the heated moment to catch their breath. They know they cannot continue what they had started. Joyce pulled away from Hopper and wiped the smudged lipstick off her face.

"I need to get back to my husband, Hopper. You should get back to your date as well", she muttered and then left.

2. Chapter 2

The following morning has been quiet. No one seems to mention the events that took place during the reunion night. The residents of Hawkins switched on to their normal routine like nothing happened.

Hopper got in the station the usual time with usual mood of hangover. Flo handed him a cup of coffee and took his cigarette from his mouth. He was about to go in his office when he heard something from his deputies. He stopped and then turned around.

"What did you say?" he asked them.

Flo eyed the two deputies to keep their mouth shut but it's too late.

"What did you say?" Hopper repeated.

"It's just that, there's this talk in town about last night", one of them answered.

"What about last night?" Hopper asked again.

"...about you and Joyce Byers making out outside the gym", he answered.

He sighed and rolled around his eyes. He forgot how fast gossip spread around in Hawkins.

"Do me a favor and keep it shut. I don't want to hear anything about it", he said to the two officers and they both nodded.

Meanwhile in Melvald's shop, Joyce took two tablets of aspirin for her growing headache. She didn't drink that much last night but she still suffers from the aftermath. The pain doesn't hinder her from doing her job. She handed the customer a grocery bag.

"Thank you", she said and tried to give a smile but that's too much for her head.

She noticed that some of the customers are looking at her for no

apparent reason...maybe there is one and she's not aware of it. She shook her head thinking it's probably nothing. Ever since high school, she's always been in their radar. They seemed to mind every move she makes so she learned to ignore them completely so she can function in her life.

A few minutes later, Lonnie came in bursting the shop. Joyce frowned at his entrance.

"Lonnie, what are you doing here?" she asked.

Everyone is now watching them.

"Come here", he said and then grabbed her by the arm and dragged her towards the back.

"Joyce, what's going on?" Ronald, the owner, asked as they passed him down the aisle.

She tried to wave at him like it's nothing but it's far from that.

"Lonnie, let go of my arm", she ordered at him but he didn't listen.

He pushed her inside the storage room and locked them both in. She turned to him confused at what's happening.

"What the hell is going on, Lonnie?" she asked starting to get irritated at his behavior.

"Yeah, that's a good question. Let me ask you that. What the hell is going on, Joyce?" he asked her back. She frowned. "One minute we're together at the party and then the minute I turned my back you're outside making out with Hopper", he added.

Joyce stiffened. Now, she gets it. That's why people were looking at her. They know. Everyone does. She's not sure how. Hopper is not the type of guy to kiss and talk although, he seemed to have change over the years. Then, she remembered, Carl, the neighbor, caught them last night.

"What? Your brain is too hangover to process a lie?" Lonnie asked.

That's true. She cannot think of any excuse to tell him. In fact, she doesn't know what else to tell him. There is nothing she can say that will make him feel better at this point. He has always been so insecure with Hopper because he knows how much she loved him.

"Talk!" Lonnie yelled and it made her scared.

This is a fight she cannot win.

"I'm sorry", that's all she can really say.

Lonnie looked at his wife with disgust and anger. His temper is already through the roof and that's it. He snapped and hit her on the face. Joyce slammed on the shelf next to her hitting her head on the steel corner of it. He grabbed her shoulders and picked her up.

"Lonnie! Please!" she pleaded as tears ran down her face.

He pinned her on the wall and grabbed her neck with his hand and chokes her.

"Lonnie...stop...I...can't...breathe..." she tried to say while catching her breath.

Back at the station, Flo received a phone call that sent her to panic mode. She got up her desk and went straight to Hopper's office.

"I thought I said coffee and contemplation", Hopper muttered as soon as the door bursts open.

"It's Joyce", she said briefly and that's all she needed to say.

Joyce tries to remove Lonnie's hand from her neck but she can't. He's always been stronger than her. He squeezed tighter not enough to make her pass out but enough to make her struggle.

"Lonnie...please..." she pleaded one more time.

Though it's not hard enough, she's already running out of air and in any moment, she will pass out.

The storage room's door suddenly opened and someone pulled Lonnie away from Joyce. She fell on the floor coughing and gasping for air. Ronald ran to her and helped her balance herself.

Lonnie got a full view of who it was who pulled him and it's Hopper looking extremely furious at him.

"Oh the prince charming is here ready to rescue his princess..." Lonnie taunted. "You've been waiting for this, haven't you? You are so jealous that it's me she married and not you! That's why you came back here? You wanted to take her from me?" he exclaimed.

"I thought about it but I knew she's not going to go for it but these things you do just makes me wanting more to take her away from you and your abusive ass!" Hopper replied.

It made Lonnie even angrier. He launched at Hopper but it's so obvious for everyone that he's no match for him. Hopper easily slammed him through the shelves and then punched him in the face repeatedly once he got him pinned down the floor. Hopper only stopped when his deputies pulled him away. They don't want their Chief to commit murder as public as that.

"Lock him up! I don't want to see him roaming around the streets of Hawkins", he ordered his deputies and they both nodded and took Lonnie away.

Hopper turned to the storage where Joyce is in with Ronald. Ronald looked at him eyeing him that she needed help. Hopper checked on Joyce who is conscious but bleeding.

"I think she hit her head on the shelf", Ronald told Hopper.

"I'm fine", Joyce managed to say and grabbed onto the shelf and got back on her feet.

At this point, pride is what's ruling her head. She knows she's weak. She's lightheaded and her vision is all blurry but she doesn't want to be the victim of something. Besides, it's her fault she got beat up by her husband.

"Joyce, we need to take you to the hospital", Hopper said calmly.

"I'm fine, Hopper. I don't need your help", she refused and tried to get pass him but she can't even walk steadily.

Hopper stopped her from moving.

"Let go, Hopper. I need to fix that mess outside", she said.

"It's alright, Joyce. I can take care of it. You need to check that cut", Ronald said.

She still tried to get pass Hopper but it's useless.

"Let go of me, Hopper. I need to get back to work", she insisted weakly.

In her attempt to get pass him, her strength turned down to zero and she just collapsed on his arms.

"I got her. I got her. I'll just take her to the hospital. Sorry about the mess outside", Hopper said to Ronald.

"No worries. Just take care of Joyce", he replied.

Hopper waited outside as the doctor took care of Joyce inside the room. His blood is still boiling from what happened. He saw the bruises on Joyce and he heard about the rumors on what's going on inside their house but he has never seen it with his own eyes. Now, he's the one who brought Joyce in the hospital after she got beat up by her husband because he found that they kissed last night. He then started putting the blame on himself. If he didn't make the move, Joyce will never be in the hospital right now.

"What happened to her?" Jonathan suddenly appeared next to him.

His face is filled with worry. Hopper has never met her kids before. He took a good look at her oldest and he has no resemblance of his violent father at all. Jonathan is calmer, gentler, and way more responsible and he can tell all that by looking at him.

"Your father happened", he answered.

He's pretty sure he's aware of what's happening with his parents. His face already tells him that.

"What did he do this time?" Jonathan asked.

Hopper gave him a look. It's not the first time and the kids are aware of that. Lonnie is now top of his list of people to bury in the woods.

"He hit her in the face. She lost her balance and her head hit the shelf inside the storage of the shop. Her head was bleeding bad...and he tried to choke the life out of her. He only let go when I pulled him away", he answered without holding anything back.

Jonathan sighed and sat next to him. Hopper can see his fists clenching tighter and tighter. The kid is holding a lot of anger in him but he figured Joyce raised him to be the opposite of his father.

"I heard about the rumor...about last night", he suddenly said. Hopper went cold. He didn't expect him to bring it up. "You and Mom were like together before. I know that. She got that look on her face when I told her that it you got appointed as Chief of Police. I never pressed her to tell me the story but I know it's something big. Their fights became more and more frequent after that. He's always angry and he stopped her from taking shifts at night. He suddenly became protective or more like possessive of her. Of course, at first, I never understand it but after I heard what happened last night, I finally did. He's threatened by you", he continued.

"I'm sorry", Hopper apologized.

Jonathan scoffed and shook his head.

"Don't be. He will beat her up even though that did not happen. He will always find something to yell at her about. I asked Mom why she sticks with him. She will give me this whole speech about family and that he is our father but I know the reason. She cannot leave him because of us. She needs to raise two boys and working at Melvald's is not going to cut it", Jonathan said.

Hopper can understand that. After Joyce's family kicked her out and him being gone in Hawkins, there is no one left but Lonnie. She tried

to make the best out of what she got.

"I wish you never left", Jonathan suddenly said and it surprised Hopper. "I know that would mean me and Will, will never been born but it's alright, I guess. At least, Mom will be happy and free from him. It's not a guarantee that you will never hurt her but I'm pretty sure you'll never hurt her like he does. If you're here to win her back, take her from Dad...I will not stand in your way. If you still love her and care for her, you have my blessing. You have mine and Will's blessing", he added.

3. Chapter 3

Joyce was discharged from the hospital after three days. Hopper was the one who picked her up and drove her to her house. They have been quiet along the way. He wanted to ask her how she feeling but he respects the space she seems to want at the moment. Her eyes are fixated at the window pretending to look at the view but in truth, she's lost in her own thoughts. How could she let things get to that point? Of course, it is obvious that she's partly in the wrong and her actions cost her to be beaten up by her husband but it's been happening to her for years and even then, there's not enough to reason for her to receive that kind of treatment. Like Jonathan said, Lonnie will find a way to yell at her about.

They finally reached the house. It is quiet and Lonnie's car isn't parked outside. He is still locked up at the station. Hopper doesn't want him anywhere near Joyce or his kids. Joyce got out of the car while Hopper grabbed her bag and together they went in the house. As soon as they opened the door, confetti popped in the living room.

"Surprise!" the kids greeted altogether.

Will and his friends, Mike, Dustin, and Lucas are all wearing their party hats while Jonathan is rolling his camera. Joyce looked around and they have decorated the house with balloons. There is a huge tarpaulin attached to the wall: **WELCOME HOME, MOM!**

"Awww...you guys! You didn't have to do all these", she exclaimed touched by the surprise welcome party.

"This is nothing", Jonathan said while shooting with his camera.

"We missed you so much so we thought we will surprise you", Will said with a bright smile on his face.

She smiled back. She hasn't seen his smile for quite some time. His friends seem to be happy as well because finally they can step inside their house. Lonnie wouldn't allow them before because he thinks they're making his son soft which Joyce finds ridiculous.

"Well, thank you. I love it and I was really surprised", Joyce said and it made the kids very happy that their plan worked.

Hopper quietly put her bag on the couch while they're all catching up.

"I should get going. Got a lot of paperwork to catch up on", he said.

All turned to his direction.

"You should stay", Joyce suddenly said.

He looked at her in surprise. He thought she wanted space after all, she's been really quiet during their drive.

"I don't want to impose. It's a family thing. I don't want to be a bother", he reasoned.

"Hopper, I want you to stay", she insisted using a tone that he's very familiar with.

"Alright...I'll stay", he gave in.

After devouring pizza and spaghetti, the kids left to play in Wheeler's basement. Jonathan wanted to stick around and help with the dishes but Joyce insisted that he goes back to his work and that she can take care of the house chores. Jonathan was about to protest but Hopper intervened and said he will stay to help his mother and he rested his case.

Joyce and Hopper worked at the kitchen silently. He is confused as to why she wanted him to stay since she's not talking to him at all. She even avoids his eyes. A few more minutes passed and the scene is still the same. He cannot take it anymore.

"Joyce...what are we doing here?" he asked breaking the silence between them.

"The dishes", she answered simply as if it's a rhetorical question.

Hopper scoffed.

"Please, don't...you know what I mean", he said.

Joyce put down the plate and sighed.

"Why do you want me to stay?" he asked.

"...because I feel safe when you're around and...and I haven't felt like that for a long time", she answered without looking at him.

Hopper was stunned by how direct she delivered that. She's a not a vocal person about her feelings but when she is, she can be pretty blunt.

"Joyce, do you really want to stay with Lonnie for the rest of your life?" he asked and this time, there's no condemnation in his voice, just pure concern. "To be honest, I don't think I can control myself again if he ever hurt you again. I will kill him, Joyce, and I don't care if that will send me to jail. I can't bear to even think of you getting hurt again", he confessed.

Joyce knew that. Hopper has a temper but unlike Lonnie, he never takes it out on her or any other people that do not deserve it. He will fight verbally but that's just it. That's why she always feels safe with him.

"What do you want me to do, Hopper?" she asked him back and she's not being sarcastic. "I work at Melvald's. I don't earn enough to pay the bills in this house. In a few years, Jonathan will go to college and I still don't know where I will find the money to send him there. I can't do it on my own", she explained.

He understood her dilemma. Jonathan already explained to him that in the hospital. She has children. It's not just about her anymore.

"Do you remember that night before Christmas? You saved all your allowances so you can buy that bike. Do you remember?" he asked recalling a past memory.

Joyce looked down and smiled.

"Yeah...jeez, that was a long time ago", she muttered in embarrassment.

"Yeah...you never got that bike because that night, your grandmother became sick and was rushed to the hospital. You were the first one to get there because your parents were on their way back from out of town. The doctors told you that your grandmother needed medicine. She didn't have insurance. So, you gave your money to the doctor and told him, 'is that enough for whatever she needs?' Of course, it wasn't enough but he didn't say anything. He was touched. You gave all your money and sacrificed getting that one thing you've dreamed of for a year so your grandmother can have her medicine. Then, I asked you, 'what about you? What about what you want?' and you said, 'I'll be fine. I'm young and healthy. I can work my way to get that bike someday.' You know it's a long shot but you're a fighter. You never give up", he said.

"...but Hopper, this isn't wanting a bike anymore. I got two kids", she reasoned.

"I know. That's why I know that you'll never give up now, not in any way, because you love them so much. You will fight for them. Don't sacrifice yourself, Joyce. If you do, who will take care of your boys when you're not here anymore? Who will protect them? Certainly, not your husband...you're all they got and you're all they need. I'm not asking you this for my own advantage. I don't expect anything. Do it for yourself and for your sons", he explained.

One month later, Lonnie packed up his things and brought it to his car. He's been kicked out of the house by Joyce and their two sons. They all watched him as he drove away from their home with a sense of relief in their hearts. Jonathan put his arm around his mother.

"We'll fine, Mom. You're not alone. I'm here", he said.

"Yeah, Mom. I'm here too", Will added.

Joyce laughed and pulled both boys into her.

The news of Joyce and Lonnie's separation spread like wildfire in Hawkins. Some thought it's very courageous of her to stand up on her own and kicked out her abusive husband while some thought she's

crazy for thinking she can raise two boys on her own.

Joyce sat on the bench on the park. It's her break time and she wanted to be on her own. A lot of people are already eyeing her all day and she wanted some time to breathe. The park is perfect. Not a lot of people go there so she got it all to herself. She lit one cigarette and started smoking. Perhaps, she's crazy for following Hopper's advice but there's one thing he's right. No one will take care of her boys if she died from Lonnie's abusive hands.

"Got a room for a big guy?" Hopper asked beside her.

Joyce smiled and nodded.

"Ronald said I might find you here. He mentioned this is your zone for peace and quiet", he informed her.

She laughed.

"Yeah...it's nice out here. The shop is always filled with people", she explained.

Hopper chuckled and lit his own cigarette. The two sat there and observed the silence in the park.

"Yeah, it is nice out here", he muttered realizing what she meant earlier. "So how's life being a single mother?" he asked.

"It's challenging. Honestly, the difference is not that big from when Lonnie was around. He's always out gambling anyway and will just come home drunk. No one yells so that's refreshing and I think the boys are more at peace. Things got better. Financially tough, but we're okay", she answered.

Hopper smiled. It's good news. He would be lying to himself if he denies that he's not happy because she's finally free and he has a chance. That part made him very happy but that's not the most important thing right now. She's free of Lonnie and now she can do whatever she wants without worrying if there is someone waiting for her at home to punch her in the face.

"I heard you and Jonathan talked while I was at the hospital", she

suddenly said.

He turned to her and just made a face.

"It's okay. He's a smart kid, both of them are. They figure things out even when I don't want them to", she said.

"Yeah...he's a great boy. You should be proud. You raised them well", he replied.

That made her happy. The validation that she did something right all those years ago when she thought she's failing miserably in life is great to hear.

"Thank you", she muttered and silence followed after that.

It's like they're just waiting for someone to bring it up but no one has the courage to.

"Hopper..." she tried to say it first but he stopped her by putting his hand over hers.

"I know. I know, Joyce", he said finishing what's on her mind. "Don't worry. I can wait", he added.

"I don't know how long it will take. I mean, I can't just jump in to this not after what happened before. I don't think I can survive that again", she said pertaining to the part where Hopper just suddenly left her.

"I know. I'll still wait no matter how long it takes", he replied.

FEW YEARS LATER – Hopper walks in the station with cigarette in his mouth. Flo quickly grabbed it away from him and gave him his coffee.

"Coffee and contemplation!" he yelled before going inside his office.

He stopped at the door when he saw Joyce waiting for him inside with her cigarette. She looked worn off and in distress.

"Joyce? What are you doing here? What happened?" he asked shutting the door behind him.

"Will is missing", she answered.

Hopper frowned. It's Hawkins after all. How can anyone be missing in Hawkins?

"Calm down, Joyce. What are you talking about Will is missing?" he asked again.

Joyce puffed on her cigarette thrice before looking back at him. She's about to have a panic attack.

"I am telling you my son is missing, Hopper. We woke up and he's not in our house and he's not at his friend's house. My son is missing, Hopper", she answered.

THE END

IT'S SHORTER THAN THE PREVIOUS STORIES I MADE BUT I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO HAVE LIKE A STORY BEFORE WILL HAS GONE MISSING. I HOPE YOU LIKE THIS ONE! THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR READING.